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17 February 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Pacification and Nation-building in Vietnam: Present Status,
Current Trends and Prospects

SUMMARY

The stabilizing of the situation in Vietnam on both the military and political fronts over the past year and a half has created an environment in which pacification has become a feasible goal. During this period, pacification objectives have been clarified -- if not yet adequately articulated -- and the essentially political nature of the problem has become more widely understood and accepted on all sides. Friendly military operations have improved local security conditions in some areas -- notably the central coastal provinces -- making them susceptible to revolutionary development activities. In other localities, the uniquely resistant attributes of certain ethnic, political and religious groups afford additional opportunities for pacification progress. The Communist grip on the countryside generally has been weakened -- partially as a result of their own misdirected policies -- and there may be some areas where their increased vulnerability offers further opportunities for exploitation.

Current pacification and nation-building concepts have evolved largely from past experience, and are based on widely accepted basic principles. Effective implementation of these concepts, however, is often hindered by their relative complexity in detail and by weaknesses which afflicted earlier programs, including administrative rigidity, a tendency toward over-planning, emphasis on techniques rather than principles, and misleading reports on "progress".

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Major strides have been made in improving the organization and effectiveness of pacification and nation-building programs on both the U.S. and GVN sides. The recent integration of U.S. civil operations into a single organization should markedly improve their effectiveness, and the aggressive leadership of the Minister for Revolutionary Development is beginning to overcome past weaknesses in the Vietnamese administrative structure. The Vietnamese civilian cadre apparatus has been completely overhauled in the past year, with various groups integrated into a single, standardized organization. Some weaknesses in cadre leadership and recruit selection remain, however, and the current emphasis on achieving quality rather than quantity will limit the expansion of revolutionary development activities in the countryside. Effective integration of civilian cadre activities with local security resources also remains a problem in many areas.

The reorientation of ARVN will have a substantial impact on pacification potential if it results in more aggressive, sustained operations aimed at neutralizing and destroying the capabilities of local Viet Cong forces to disrupt revolutionary development activities. The anticipated reinforcement of Viet Cong guerrilla warfare efforts may require increased use of U.S. military forces in direct support of the RVNAF to maintain an acceptable degree of security for the pacification program.

Although pacification progress in the countryside has been slow, 1966 can be characterized as a year in which substantial progress was made in reorganizing and laying the foundation for an effective program. The goals for 1967 are modest -- the emphasis is on consolidation -- but there is ample reason to hope that the program will attain an accelerating momentum as the year progresses.

Introduction

The relative improvement in the general military situation since mid-1965 has focussed increasing attention on the problems of pacification and nation-building. The build-up of Free World and Vietnamese forces has more than kept pace with the growth of the Communist military potential, enabling Allied forces to gain the initiative against the enemy's main force units, keep them off balance, and dash Communist hopes for a military victory. This more favorable military balance has also reinforced the trend toward a stabilized political situation, thus dampening Viet Cong hopes for an early

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collapse of the Vietnamese Government. The dissipation of these twin threats has created a climate in which pacification has become a feasible objective and in which substantial progress has been made in refining organizations, fashioning resources, and establishing the basis for deliberate forward movement in pacification.

Pacification Objectives

Since mid-1965, the complexities and basic nature of the pacification and nation-building task have become more widely recognized than before. This recognition has not yet been fully articulated, however, and has not been reflected realistically in current plans. While a generalized consensus has evolved with respect to pacification objectives, differences in emphasis have often confused and diffused plans and directives, given rise to sometimes irrational priorities, and produced undue expectations of rapid success.

Combined U.S.-Vietnamese planning directives, both military and civil, reflect a generally agreed view of pacification objectives. The MACV-RVNAF National Campaign Plan for 1967 (AB 142) describes the objective as being one of restoring, consolidating, and expanding government control in selected populated areas throughout Vietnam. It amplifies this aim as being "to liberate the people from Viet Cong control, restore public security, initiate political, economic, and social development, extend effective GVN authority, and win the willing support of the people". The planning guidelines of the GVN's Ministry for Revolutionary Development, published jointly with the U.S. Embassy, describe the objective as one of bringing "security, liberty, democracy, social justice, and happiness" to the people. It also uses phrases such as "attach the rural populace to its local authorities and inculcate the trait of their being mutually responsive"; "...establish solidarity between the people, the RVNAF, and the GVN"; "...develop a new society in rural areas, incorporating democracy, land reform and equality" in describing Revolutionary Development objectives.

In comparing these statements, one notes some difference in emphasis between the military statement and that of the civil agencies. While the former includes most of the total functional aims of the program, the formulation has an essentially administrative, imposed connotation. The civil statement, although more diffuse and vague, is placed in an essentially political context. But neither suffices as a clear-cut definition of the fundamentally political objective of the pacification task, which is to align the people against the Viet Cong and on the side of the GVN. All other aims and goals -- security,

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social development, administrative control, democracy, economic development, etc. -- are really subordinate to the basic political objective of turning the people against the VC and gaining their support for the GVN. Until this principle is acknowledged, widely comprehended, and clearly articulated in planning documents, there is a possibility of further false starts, confused and irrational planning, and disappointments in pacification progress.

That the Viet Cong acknowledge and base their doctrine on this basic political principle is reflected in their plans and actions. The underlying aim of their doctrinal "People's War" is to mobilize the rural populace in order to overthrow the GVN and place the Communist Party in power. The Communists develop military forces and commit them in combat essentially as a means of protecting and supporting the extension of their political apparatus among the populace. They measure the success of their military effort only in the context of its contribution to this basic purpose. They regard their military forces as a political instrument -- the "vanguard of the revolution". They castigate commanders and political cadre who emphasize purely military action to the exclusion of the other two elements -- political and subversive -- of their "three-pronged" offensive against the GVN. Indeed, the recent polemic debate in the Communist camp on the relative importance of guerrilla warfare, as opposed to the large unit "war of maneuver", reflects internal Party "self-criticism" stemming from what the Communists now recognize was a premature shift to "Phase III" in early 1965. To make this shift, they created main force units at the expense of their local guerrilla potential. As a consequence, they admittedly lost momentum in their effort to extend their political apparatus in the countryside. Had U.S. intervention not robbed them of certain victory in 1965, their decision to "rob Peter to pay Paul" by draining off the strength of the local guerrillas would have escaped criticism. But their failure to gain victory has left their rural political apparatus in a weakened and exposed state, and necessitated a down-shifting of gears to ensure its protection through intensified guerrilla warfare. The timeliness and adequacy of their renewed focus on the rural political struggle will be a decisive factor in our own pacification progress this year.

The basic contest, then, is for dominant political influence over the populace. It is a contest being waged between the opposing political mechanisms of the Viet Cong and the GVN, each supported by military and paramilitary forces whose function is to protect and support their respective political

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structures. The security problem for the GVN is compounded by the essentially clandestine character of the Viet Cong's basic political mechanism -- the Party apparatus -- and its reliance on terrorism. The Communist apparatus, including its guerrilla and local force support elements, is flexible and mobile. It evades military operations by refusing battle and dispersing or temporarily going underground; it presents few fixed targets. The government's political apparatus, and its support elements, on the other hand, operate overtly and with fixed facilities. It is by nature less flexible and presents vulnerable targets. The establishment of a secure environment for the government's political mechanism must therefore be addressed on two fronts: security against direct military attack, and security from subversion and terrorism. The former is a function of counterforce operations aimed at neutralizing or destroying those Viet Cong elements -- local force and guerrilla units -- whose mission is primarily to protect the political apparatus and to destroy that of the GVN. The second front is essentially a function of political actions aimed at aligning the people with the GVN. The two are complementary, since attainment of popular support will enhance the prospects for obtaining information on impending Viet Cong military actions. Emphasis on military security alone is not sufficient; the most "secure" areas in the military sense, until the recent advent of plentiful friendly combat air capabilities, were those "liberated" by the Viet Cong. Security can be only partially imposed by military power; full security for the GVN political structure can be attained only through the development of popular participation in the struggle against the Viet Cong.

If engaging the rural populace in support of the GVN is acknowledged as the fundamental objective of pacification, then we can develop plans and concepts, adapt organizations, and allocate resources more rationally in order to achieve success in the decisive contest -- that for dominant political influence on the populace.

The Target - Human Terrain

The target of pacification activity -- the populace -- is highly fragmented by race, regionalism, religion, politics, and an inherent mistrust of "outside" influences and authority. Some 80 percent of the people are racially Vietnamese, but their sense of "nationalism" is more ethnic and cultural than political. In general, the rural populace does not feel morally or patriotically obliged to support the GVN in the struggle against the Viet Cong. Politically apathetic,

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their only real loyalties are to the family or clan, and the village. They are largely unaware of or unaffected by the existence of any higher governmental authority except through occasional contact with district or provincial officials. Caught up in the pressures of the war, which increasingly affect their daily life except in the most remote areas, they yearn to be left alone so that they may earn their livelihood in accordance with traditional practices.

The social fabric of the country has been rent by a generation of insecurity and war, and by the pervasive pressures of a widespread, well organized revolutionary movement. The traditional and revered role of the family and village have been disrupted by the war; "reactionary" elders, landowners and family heads have been assassinated. Families have been divided, and many hamlets shorn of their productive manpower. Husbands and sons have been conscripted by the Saigon Government, proselyted or impressed by the Communists, or fled to the relative security of urban areas to evade both. Traditional forms of village and hamlet government have broken down under Viet Cong terrorism and persuasion, to be replaced by youthful cadre imbued with revolutionary zeal and Marxist "scientific" efficiency. Through political agitation and terrorism, the Viet Cong have not only unleashed a socio-political revolution, but by their methods have made it inevitable.

The urban populace -- including the inhabitants of the larger provincial and district towns as well as the five major municipalities -- has largely been ignored in the pacification and nation-building context. One of the major post-war developments has been the accelerating migration from rural areas to the towns and cities. Although this social pattern is common in most areas of the world, it has probably occurred at a greater rate in Vietnam than elsewhere because of the continuing disruptions of the war. Insecurity in the countryside has created a flow of more than a million "registered" refugees, most of them now concentrated in the vicinity of urban areas, and an equal or greater number of "unregistered" refugees has also sought sanctuary in and near the towns and cities. Traditionally, the "urban elite", which has enjoyed better levels of education and higher standards of living than the peasantry, has been the source of leadership in the military forces and the civil service. More sophisticated and politically conscious than their rural brethren, they have nonetheless viewed the government with cynicism and scorn. Widespread corruption and graft and the general deterioration and breakdown in the past few years of most public services have reinforced their disdain for officialdom. The influx from the countryside and other social

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dislocations caused by the war, the rising cost of living, and the overwhelming presence in most urban areas of Free World military forces have created an unfavorable political climate susceptible to Communist exploitation.

Popular Strengths and Weaknesses

Regional differences pose significant social and political problems. These arise largely from variations in dialect and customs, and from ancient dynastic quarrels as well as from more recent political history. There are also regional variations in rural population distribution and landholding patterns, which complicate such fundamental issues as land reform. These regional differences create difficulties in the deployment of ARVN units, as well as in the assignment of government officials, especially those at province and district levels who must work closely with the local inhabitants.

The existence of substantially unassimilated ethnic minority groups also complicates the pacification task. While most of the 1.5 million Chinese live in the larger cities and towns, they control much of the country's commerce and dominate the vital rice marketing system in rural areas. They are essentially apolitical and have tended to avoid involvement in the war, shrugging off both Communist and government efforts to influence them. More than one-half million Montagnards, comprising diverse tribal groups, live in isolated and widely scattered, semi-transient settlements in the highlands. Disdained by the Vietnamese as "savages" and vulnerable to Viet Cong blandishments of autonomy, their traditional political inertness is tending toward a nascent sense of cohesion which has created frictions with the GVN. The Montagnards have not provided fertile ground for Viet Cong activities, and have willingly participated in several pacification programs. The more than one-half million ethnic Khmers inhabiting large areas of the Mekong Delta similarly have also not been assimilated by the Vietnamese, and are looked on with suspicion by some officials. Their ethnic separateness has presented something of an obstacle, however, to Viet Cong subversion, and has facilitated some local pacification successes.

Religious diversity is also a mixed blessing from the viewpoint of pacification. The almost two million Catholics -- many of them refugees from the north -- have been especially resistant to Communist subversion and successful pacification efforts have been conducted in areas where Catholics predominate. To a lesser extent, the Hoa Hao (about 1.5 million in the Delta)

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and the Cao Dai (about one million, with the largest concentration in Tay Ninh province), seem to be somewhat resistant to Viet Cong proselyting. Both of these latter two religious sects have flirted with the Communists in the past, but now apparently recognize the threat to their existence posed by an assumption of power by the Viet Cong. The relatively secure An Giang area in the Delta is dominated by the Hoa Hao sect, and neighboring Hoa Hao areas may offer pacification potential. Buddhism and traditional Confucianism, which account for the bulk of the populace, do not seem to pose substantial barriers to Communist subversion, although some local Buddhist leaders may offer anti-Communist potential. The essentially pacifist characteristics of Buddhist extremists have clashed in the past with the more militant anti-Communism of the other religious sects, and will continue to pose political problems for some time to come.

Although most political parties offer little in the way of national organization or programs, some have relatively strong regional roots. Notable among these are the anti-Communist Dai Viet and Vietnam Nationalist parties, which have substantial local strength in the northern provinces. These groups have contributed substantially to cadre programs in areas where they are dominant, but this has led to friction in areas where they are competing for local power. The only other strong political groups of any consequence, other than the residual elements of the anti-government "struggle movement", are those affiliated with the religious sects.

Several large areas of the countryside have been dominated by the Communists for an entire generation. The Viet Cong political apparatus is firmly entrenched in the traditional "war zones" in the Delta and north of Saigon, in the central provinces of Phu Yen, Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, Quang Tin and part of Quang Nam, and in a few red "oil spots" in Thua Thien province. The task of aligning the populace in these areas against the Viet Cong may be a long and difficult one. In most other areas, however, Communist influence has permeated the countryside only in the past few years, its infrastructure is weak, and the populace is not strongly aligned with the Viet Cong. Much of the populace has been alienated by the harsh measures imposed by the Communists in the past two years. Heavy taxation, enforced recruitment, and heavy-handed terrorism invoked in the Viet Cong drive for victory in 1965 and 1966 have disaffected previously passive elements of the population. Intensification of the war and the obvious consequences of the presence of

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Viet Cong troops have engendered a substantial exodus from Communist dominated areas. In many areas, the demonstrated preponderance of Allied military power has weakened Viet Cong claims of inevitable victory, and the populace has sensed a loss of momentum in the extension of Communist influence.

All of these factors combine to create islands of political strength throughout South Vietnam. Many of these are well known, and are being exploited. Others are not so well known or have escaped detection and attention. They include locales where minority groups are concentrated, whether racial, religious, or political; areas where Viet Cong influence is weak for whatever reason, whether through the ineptness of their cadre, geographic factors, or a preponderance of friendly military strength; areas where local Vietnamese officials are especially capable and dynamic and possess the requisite political "sense". The urban component has been largely overlooked, but deserves attention. The human terrain for pacification is diverse; some portions are arid and some are non-tillable; others are fertile and being cultivated, but others are fertile and lying fallow. In the context of gaining popular support for the GVN, the more fertile areas should be identified and cultivated first, with the nurturing of anti-guerrilla potential in less productive soils relegated to lesser priorities.

Present Pacification Concepts

The basic concepts for pacification are reflected in the planning documents cited earlier, and are only summarized here. Essentially, there is a general division of labor between U.S. and other Free World military forces and those of the Vietnamese Government. The former are to engage largely in operations aimed at neutralizing and destroying the capabilities of the enemy's main force units, while the latter will concentrate on directly supporting pacification and Revolutionary Development. The two missions are not mutually exclusive, and all forces are to contribute to the pacification task by engaging in civic action projects whenever possible, and provide direct tactical support as necessary.

The planning documents divide pacification into three phases: the military offensive, securing (or Revolutionary Development), and development (or nation-building). In the first phase, regular military forces conduct operations to clear an area of enemy main force units larger than company

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in size. In the second phase Revolutionary Development cadre groups, normally comprising 59 men, are introduced into cleared hamlets to identify and eliminate Viet Cong cadre, re-establish effective hamlet government, organize the populace for self-defense, engage in immediate impact civic action projects based on the "self-help" principle, and stimulate political support for the GVN. During this phase, Vietnamese military and para-military forces are expected to provide security for the cadre teams. In the third phase, further civil programs are undertaken to improve social and economic standards in the hamlet. During this phase, responsibility for security is expected to pass to the National Police when feasible. These phases are to be carried out essentially in terms of the "oil spot" concept, working gradually outward from secured and developed areas into insecure areas.

The distinction between the second and third phases has been muted during the planning cycle for 1967, so that "developmental" or "nation-building" tasks will be undertaken more or less simultaneously with the "securing" or "Revolutionary Development" tasks. Plans provide for according special emphasis to four National Priority areas, which are defined as areas of critical national importance where civil and military resources are to be focussed on a priority basis. These include an area around Da Nang in Quang Nam province, two districts in the vicinity of Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh province, a cluster of provinces surrounding Saigon, and a group of provinces in the central Delta area. In addition, each corps tactical zone, division tactical area, and province has established its own priority areas which affect regional and local pacification planning, and the GVN has given priority status to about one-half of the nation's provinces, including those in the National Priority areas.

The GVN's Ministry of Revolutionary Development, which is charged with overall pacification responsibility, has emphasized the themes of "consolidation" and "quality rather than quantity" in developing the 1967 program. Some 1,100 hamlets are to receive attention by Revolutionary Development teams this year. Of those, 40 percent will pass through all three phases, 40 percent represent formerly pacified hamlets to be consolidated, and about 20 percent will be given merely a "lick-and-a-promise" in terms of rooting out Viet Cong cadre and other undesirable elements without any effort at development.

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Lessons of Past Failures

The present concepts outlined above embody basic principles of earlier pacification programs, most of which failed. Many factors contributed to these past failures, not the least of which has been the effectiveness of Viet Cong counteraction. The Communists have proven adept at determining the weaknesses of pacification efforts, and have been quick to exploit them to their advantage. But Viet Cong countermeasures have not always been the primary cause for pacification setbacks. While most plans have acknowledged some or all of the fundamental precepts found in present programs, these precepts have not always been adhered to in implementation. There have been many reasons for this; breakdowns in governmental coordination, lack of cooperation between the National Government and officials at corps, division, province and district, and occasional lapses in coordination between U.S. agencies in Saigon or in the field. In some instances, there has been lack of understanding of the concepts by Vietnamese or American officials at various levels. In others, officials have not been sold on the concept or on the importance of the program, and have either impeded progress or merely gone through the motions. In still other cases, there have been flagrant instances of exaggerated reporting of results in response to pressures from above, or emphasis on quantity rather than quality.

In the case of the strategic hamlet program, undue emphasis was placed on the construction of physical defenses to the exclusion of training and arming of local defense forces. Some programs have been overly ambitious, either expanding beyond the capacity of available resources or attempting to reach into areas where pacification was not feasible. Inadequacies in local leadership, in cadre training, or in selection of cadre personnel have also contributed to some failures. A significant factor has also been the proclivity of many province chiefs to subordinate pacification to purely military exigencies when forced to allocate their inadequate military resources. Another cause in some cases has been over-planning and over-coordination, resulting in conflicting priorities and an overtaxing of the often limited administrative capabilities of Vietnamese officials.

Perhaps the underlying cause in most cases, however, has been the failure to maintain the focus on the essentially political objective -- engaging the people in support of the GVN. Those programs which have attained the

THE FIRST EMPHASIS (HE HAS IT PROPERLY ELSEWHERE) : ENGAGING THE PEOPLE AGAINST THE VC. THE GOV'T HAS A LONG HISTORY OF "INACQUAINTANCE" AND IT WILL TAKE A WHILE TO ERASE MEMORIES PAINTED CHECK MEMORIES. TO FOCUS ON VC TERRORISM, TERRORISM, IMPRESSION, ETC. AND THUS PAINTING AN UNPLEASANT PICTURE

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greatest success were those which maintained this focus. Most of those which failed either did not have the political ingredient in the beginning, or lost it as the program evolved.

Critique of Current Concepts

The current program represents a substantial improvement over those in the past, drawing as it does the best features of most of them. The program enjoys unusually perceptive, dynamic and aggressive leadership on the GVN side. In the short year since he assumed responsibility for the program, General Thang has focussed on developing an awareness of the concepts by Vietnamese officials at all levels. The program has attained status and its importance is being increasingly acknowledged.

Nevertheless, there are still some areas for concern. The fundamental importance of the essentially political objective is not fully accepted by many responsible officials, both Vietnamese and American. General Thang has pointed this out in his 1967 planning directive, deploring the tendency to concentrate on material accomplishments rather than on gaining the support and participation of the people in the pacification task. In addressing the techniques for providing security to cadre teams and to develop hamlets, the planning directives emphasize techniques to be employed (i. e., saturation patrol and ambush activity) rather than the objective of neutralizing or destroying the capabilities of those local Viet Cong forces likely to interfere with pacification and development. The direct counterforce principle guiding the employment of U. S. and Free World military forces against the enemy's main force units is not extended explicitly to the employment of RVNAF units against the enemy's provincial battalions, district companies, and village guerrilla units whose primary mission is to counter the encroachment of pacification into areas of Communist political influence.

Another danger is the tendency to inhibit flexibility in selecting areas for local pacification emphasis by insisting on rigid adherence to priorities established by successive layers of authority. Current priorities generally seem to be based more on exclusively strategic military considerations than on political feasibility or desirability, i. e., the political fertility of the human terrain.

On balance, current concepts appear generally sound, but we must avoid the pitfalls which proved the undoing of previous programs in terms of losing sight of the basic objective, inflexible adherence to unmeaningful priorities, over-planning, and emphasis on techniques rather than principles.

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Tools and Resources -- The GVN

The Vietnamese administrative structure has generally been very weak, especially in terms of its ability to execute programs as complex as pacification and nation-building. The entire administrative apparatus suffers from an inadequate reservoir of trained and dedicated talent. The GVN inherited cumbersome French bureaucratic procedures which had been superimposed on inflexible Mandarin concepts. Inefficient methods have compounded the inadequacies of outmoded laws and regulations. Disruptions caused by many changes in government have sapped initiative at most levels. Manpower demands of the military establishment have drained off much of the available talent, and low salaries, assignment of military officers to key positions, conservative personnel policies, and widespread corruption among higher officials have demoralized members of the civil service and reduced its ability to attract potential talent.

The military establishment is only slightly less inefficient than the civil structure. Both have been submerged under a plethora of complicated, interrelated projects with competing priorities which would tax the capabilities of a relatively efficient organization. Competing and overlapping chains of command, between and within the civil and military establishments, have further reduced efficiency. Vietnamese administration is characterized by the issuance of decrees and policies which are often ignored in the field. With the assumption of power by military officers at most echelons, lower priorities have been accorded to civil and political tasks. The entire structure is afflicted with rigidity, and is generally unresponsive to pressures from below.

The picture is not all black, however, and there is some hope for improvement. The outstanding performance of the administrative apparatus in turning out the vote in the recent National Assembly elections demonstrated its potential when given a single priority task to accomplish. In that instance, full responsibility and authority was vested in a single official (General Thang), who was able to impose effective coordination among the various ministries and to stimulate follow-through in the field in a fashion unprecedented in recent Vietnamese history. General Thang enjoys similar authority with respect to the Revolutionary Development program, and his dynamism and insistence on real performance, rather than going through the motions, are beginning to have substantial impact on the program. He has managed to obtain a large number of recent graduates from the National

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Institute for Administration for assignment to Revolutionary Development activities at province and district level, and he is vigorously pursuing a policy of weeding out inept and corrupt officials. These efforts, if sustained, will pay dividends over the long term, but over-all improvement will be a slow process.

The Cadre

In the final analysis, the success of the program will depend in large measure on the effectiveness of the Revolutionary Development Cadre in stimulating political activity and establishing contact between the people and the GVN. Approximately 25,000 trained RD cadre are now deployed in the field, and an additional 16,000 will be trained this year. Earlier plans to expand the capacity of the training center were dropped in favor of emphasizing quality rather than quantity during 1967. The performance of the cadre teams has been mixed, largely because of deficiencies in selection of personnel, uneven leadership, and mal-deployment and misuse of some teams. Improved recruiting techniques, an ongoing leadership retraining program, and a recent orientation program for province and district officials concerned with pacification should tend to alleviate these difficulties. The leadership problem is a difficult one, however, and will not be overcome easily. The techniques of political stimulation are somewhat sophisticated, contradict traditional Vietnamese concepts and, therefore, are somewhat difficult to impart effectively to the average Vietnamese peasant. The competition for potential leaders among the various military and civil components of both the Viet Cong and the GVN is very keen, and the cadre program suffers from this competition along with other organizations.

The capacity of the training centers at Vung Tau and Pleiku is probably adequate for current needs, in terms of the ability of most provinces to utilize effectively the number of teams they will activate this year. The physical capacity of these centers could be increased to step up the output, but it is questionable whether the flow of suitable recruits, especially leaders, would be adequate. The output of teams could be increased if their size were reduced, but again the availability of suitable leaders would pose limitations. * It has been suggested that the organic security component (about two-thirds) of the team could be eliminated by relying on other elements, such as the Regional or Popular Forces or the Police Field Forces, to provide the requisite security force. The feasibility of this solution is questionable,

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however, in view of the limited availability of suitably trained and motivated elements in those forces. This question deserves further study in the light both of existing manpower shortages and the future needs for accelerating expansion of the program.

The political role of the cadre team is paramount and unique in its contribution to the total pacification task. It is one that cannot be performed by foreigners or by the paramilitary forces of the GVN without specialized and intensive training and motivation. In order to accomplish their task, i.e., ⁽³⁾aligning the populace against the Viet Cong and in support of the GVN, the cadre team must be able to offset Viet Cong propaganda activities by conducting an effective political and psychological action program. This entails the taking of a census to classify the inhabitants of the hamlet according to their sympathies, attitudes, and economic and social status, in the process identifying pro-Viet Cong elements. The people are organized to engage in political and social actions, and an appropriate information program is planned and conducted. At the same time, elements of the team establish informant nets, re-establish an effective local administration, develop a defensive plan and organize and train a local self-defense force, and stimulate the populace to engage in needed self-help projects, for which the team procures materials. While doing all these things, the cadre team itself undertakes some civic action projects designed to gain the goodwill, trust and confidence of the people, and assists in providing security for the hamlet. The net aim of these activities is to re-establish government influence in the area and eliminate that of the Viet Cong, and to get the people involved in activities in support of that aim.

The Military Forces

Effective cadre operations are feasible only in a secure environment. As discussed earlier, the cadre teams are to be introduced after Viet Cong main force units above company size have been cleared from the area. Although the 59-man team is armed, it lacks the ability to withstand a company-sized attack. It is thus dependent on support from military forces for protection against such attacks. In many areas, such protection has been lacking, and the operations of cadre teams have often been adversely affected by their lack of confidence that such protection would be forthcoming when needed.

ARVN previously has not been effectively engaged in support of pacification. Although many of its "search and clear" operations have been

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rationalized as support for pacification, they have had little impact in terms of establishing a secure environment. Province chiefs generally have not had sufficient military resources at their disposal to carry out all of their conflicting responsibilities, including that of providing security to RD cadre operations. ARVN division commanders, at the same time, have been reluctant to detach combat units and place them at the disposal of province chiefs for any length of time.

This problem will be resolved in part under current plans, which call for a general reorientation of the bulk of ARVN to provide direct support to pacification. About 60 battalions drawn from the various ARVN divisions will be placed under the control of province chiefs. Whether this number will be adequate is questionable, but it represents a move in the proper direction. Much will depend on whether these units are employed in an essentially passive role to "screen" cadre operations, or are used aggressively in offensive counterforce operations against Viet Cong local force battalions and companies and village guerrilla units.

Regional, Popular and Police Field Force resources are limited. Ceilings imposed on strengths of these units in each province and the allocation of these forces to static security missions limit their availability for effective support of pacification. Despite efforts to retrain and motivate the Popular Forces, they remain largely ineffective and still suffer substantial losses through desertion.

The vast majority of U.S. combat forces are not involved in direct support of pacification, in consonance with current roles and missions concepts. A number of U.S. Marine Corps battalions in the north and a few battalions of U.S. Army troops in the south have been committed in a direct support role, as are most of the ROK forces in the central coastal provinces. All U.S. and Free World forces, however, are expected to engage in local civic action projects. The use of non-Vietnamese forces in a direct support role -- particularly in an "area security" concept -- poses a number of problems. For one thing, the continuous presence of foreign forces in strength in rural areas can have a basically negative impact on the political aim of aligning the people with the government, despite the "goodness" of their works. It conveys a connotation to both the people and to government elements, including the RVNAF, that pacification is a "foreign" rather than a Vietnamese program, and it tends to "confirm" to peasants the Communist charges of U.S. imperialist intent. The problem of coordinating operations

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between foreign and local Vietnamese units apparently has not been satisfactorily resolved in all instances, with detrimental effects in terms of lowered morale and rising resentment on the part of Vietnamese officials. Foreign forces can be used with good effect to reinforce ARVN units in counterforce operations outward from the periphery of secure areas, but their utility in an area security role within pacified areas is questionable. Over-involvement of foreign forces in local security in the long run seems to be potentially counterproductive in terms both of stifling the development of Vietnamese leadership, and of economy of force.

Opposition and Obstacles

The most obvious obstacle to pacification is that posed by the Viet Cong. Although the Viet Cong have lost the initiative in large-unit operations and have suffered heavy casualties, their forces remain about as numerous as ever and have survived the introduction of the equivalent of eleven well-trained, well-equipped and highly motivated infantry divisions enjoying overwhelming technological advantages. The Viet Cong are certainly encountering serious difficulties, however, in terms of disrupted base areas and lines of communication, loss of momentum in some rural areas, and attendant lowering of morale. Despite these difficulties, they are maintaining a high level of activity marked by frequent attacks and harassments of friendly outposts and facilities.

The Communists recognize the threat posed to their insurgency by the Revolutionary Development program, and give every indication of their intent to counter it. This is reflected especially in their growing emphasis on intensified guerrilla warfare, both to disrupt pacification and to dissipate friendly military resources. They can be expected to slow down the development of their main force capabilities in favor of expanding and reinforcing the capabilities of their village and hamlet guerrilla elements. In essence, they will attempt to integrate more closely their "three-pronged offensive", i.e., military, political, and subversive activity. The critical question in 1967 will be whether the reorientation of ARVN to support pacification will be sufficient to cope with the anticipated reinforcement of the Viet Cong challenge for dominant influence over the rural population.

Popular Attitudes

Popular attitudes also pose an obstacle to pacification progress. The rural populace is more likely to react favorably to political cadre, troops,

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and officials drawn from the local area than to "outsiders" from another province, region, or country. This innate peasant suspicion makes it desirable to recruit Revolutionary Development Cadre from the locale in which they are to work. Cadre so drawn naturally will be familiar with local customs and traditions, and can be trained to exploit these to their advantage. The increasing scarcity of manpower in rural areas, however, makes it difficult to adhere to this principle.

Of potentially greater significance is the problem of overcoming the inertia and disinterest of the GVN administrative structure, and the potentially adverse impact on ARVN and GVN officials at all levels stemming from the growing U.S. involvement in all facets of pacification and nation-building. Whether the bulk of ARVN will accept its more specialized and limited role of supporting pacification, and will forego its past practice of looting villagers are also major questions. The populace has had little affection for ARVN or any other element which has shown disregard for the property of the villagers.

Other obstacles include the rivalry for power between the corps commanders, who possess sweeping political and military power in their areas, and the dynamic leadership of the "super-ministry" in Saigon.* Related to this is the concern of local officials over the revolutionary aspects of the program, especially the anti-corruption policy, which threatens the interests of the entrenched bureaucratic structure at all echelons. There is also some concern in Saigon over the drawing of cadre from locally strong political parties, which puts the GVN in the position of subsidizing and sponsoring potentially oppositionist political forces.

There is also some concern that the evolving political development activity, and especially the forthcoming national elections, will divert the Revolutionary Development Cadre from purely pacification tasks. This concern may be unwarranted, however, since involvement of the cadre in election activities could complement, rather than disrupt, the pacification effort if properly handled. Such political activity could bolster the effort to align the populace against the Viet Cong, and the ensuing political base should strengthen the pacification effort. A major question is the extent to which the GVN will attempt to sponsor a major political party or alliance, and whether this will conflict with the interests of those political and religious groups from which the cadre have been drawn in some areas.

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Administrative rigidities also pose an obstacle to pacification progress. The current planning cycle decentralizes detailed planning to the provinces, but these plans are closely reviewed and modified at ~~division~~ division and corps level, and again by Saigon authorities. Current concepts for establishing priorities at all echelons, with emphasis for their selection largely on the basis of military necessity, limit the planning flexibility at province level, and virtually rule out the exploitation of targets of opportunity which might present themselves after the annual plans are set in concrete. Quotas established in the plans are held as sacrosanct; even though the passage of time may show them to have been unrealistic, many officials feel obligated to achieve "paper" results in order to placate higher levels.

Organization for Pacification

The Vietnamese structure for pacification is headed in theory by the War Minister, who is charged with coordinating those portions of the civil and military establishments involved in the task. Actually, the recent incumbent, General Co, has played little part in pacification, relying on General Thang, who heads the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, to provide the necessary leadership. A Revolutionary Development Council, comprising the heads of military and civil agencies directly involved in pacification, has been created at the national level but it also does not seem to play a significant role. Similar councils also exist at corps, division and province level, but the extent of their control and direction apparently varies widely throughout the country.

General Thang has been elevated to "super-ministerial" status, the Ministries of Public Works and Agriculture, and a portion of the Ministry of Interior having been placed under his authority. This move has given him control over those civil agencies most closely involved in pacification tasks. Closer integration of military and civil planning has been facilitated by General Thang's concurrent assignment as Deputy Chief of Staff for Pacification in the RVNAF Joint General Staff. Although this command arrangement is somewhat complex, General Thang has revised normal Vietnamese administrative practices, employing the "task force" technique with some effectiveness. His leadership qualities have stimulated the normally inert Vietnamese bureaucratic structure into abnormally effective performance in some instances. If he survives in his present position of authority, there

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is hope for further streamlining the Vietnamese machinery, both at the national level and in the field.

The Vietnamese corps commands have a dual civil-military relationship to the pacification effort, since the corps commanders also exercise the duties of regional civil delegates of the national government. Thus they not only coordinate plans involving the employment of ARVN units, but are also involved in assignments of key civil officials and the review of certain civil administrative activities in their areas. The division commands technically are involved only with respect to reviewing and coordinating provincial plans and providing military forces to support pacification. Province chiefs and their staffs play a key role in the pacification effort, since they perform the detailed civil and military planning and must direct the implementation of those plans in consonance with the resources made available to them by the national government and U.S. aid programs. District chiefs normally don't contribute greatly to the basic planning cycle, but play a significant role in the implementation of provincial plans by the civil and military resources available to them.

American Organization

On the American side, pacification plans and support operations are undertaken under the auspices of the Mission Council, chaired by the Ambassador. Direct responsibility for pacification is now divided between the military command's Revolutionary Development Support Directorate, and the newly established Office of Civil Operations (OCO), which merged the field components of the principal U.S. civil agencies into a single organization. Coordination between the civil and military components is effected either through the Mission Council or bilaterally. A joint planning group is soon to be established. The military support directorate advises both pacification-related elements of the RVNAF general staff and the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, and supervises pacification activities of the military advisory detachments serving with Vietnamese corps, division, sector (province), and sub-sector (district) commands. The OCO staff includes advisers at the Revolutionary Development Ministry, and newly integrated civil advisory teams at region and provincial level. Field coordination with the military advisors is accomplished at corps and sector (province) levels by senior civilian representatives. The new civil organization has not yet been fully tested, but should improve coordination and cooperation at all levels, not only between the formerly divided civilian agencies, but also with the military elements.

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American agencies, both civil and military, are essentially in an advisory and support role to the Vietnamese agencies. Although this relationship is often frustrating because of the bureaucratic weaknesses of the Vietnamese structure, it is essential to the political aim of the program and must be preserved. The increasing preponderance of the American presence has already weakened and aroused resentment on the part of many Vietnamese, who are jealous of their national prerogatives. The preservation of the image of Vietnamese sovereignty and independence is critically important psychologically.

The question of the assumption of responsibility for Revolutionary Development programs on the American side by the military component has recently been raised. The political disadvantages to such a move would seem to outweigh the limited organizational advantages. Aside from the deleterious effects this would have on the critical matter of political development and civilianization of the GVN, it is questionable whether the source of American advice and support -- civil or military -- would significantly alter or rectify the inadequacies of the GVN administrative apparatus. There is little question but that subordinating Revolutionary Development to military authority on both the Vietnamese and American military sides would seriously weaken the political ingredient in the program and detract from the primary objective.

Current Pacification Status

It is difficult to measure progress in pacification on the basis of current reporting. The only means hitherto at hand has been the statistical data on the numbers of hamlets in a secure status. Although these statistics are of dubious reliability because of occasional shifts in criteria and re-evaluations, it is apparent that there was a net gain of modest proportions in the number of secured hamlets during 1966. While there may be wide variations in the degree of security and GVN control attained in each hamlet, it can be said with reasonable assurance that GVN influence is dominant in about one-third of the nation's roughly 11,500 hamlets. Although improvement in some geographic areas has been offset to some extent by retrogression in others, real progress is evident in certain locales -- notably in portions of Vinh Binh, Vinh Long, Phu Yen, and Binh Dinh provinces. In these and some other places, there is tangible evidence that the populace has been effectively engaged against the Viet Cong. This evidence is reflected in part in the active participation of the people in their own defense, their providing of

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intelligence on the Viet Cong, and their continuing participation and pride in ongoing social and economic improvement activities.

The net gain of a few hundred hamlets in the secure category during 1966 represents only partial fulfillment (less than 50%) of the goals for that year. But this is only a partial reflection of the real progress made last year in terms of refining concepts, broadening understanding and interest in the program, reorganizing and consolidating cadre resources, and streamlining the organizational structure on both the American and Vietnamese sides. Comparing the status of these facets of the program at the start of 1966 with that existing at the end of the year, considerable satisfaction can be derived from even the modest statistical increase in the number of secure hamlets.

A new evaluation system was put into effect at the beginning of this year. This system measures the status of each hamlet on a grid which applies one of five grade levels for each of six basic factors in the pacification effort. Utilization of this new system should give a more meaningful reading of where each hamlet stands in terms of the pacification program as a whole, and also with respect to specific major program areas. Since the system measures the quality of both security and developmental factors, it will be possible to determine the status of specific program areas, thus identifying points where further emphasis or support may be needed that may be lagging. In this sense, the system will function as a management as well as an analytical tool at all levels.

Based on currently available data, two-thirds of the hamlets and almost half of the population of Vietnam remain under some degree of Viet Cong political influence. While this would seem to pose a monumental task for the pacification effort, it must be noted that the degree of Viet Cong influence varies in the target hamlets. Moreover, recent intelligence reports and captured documents reflect considerable Communist concern over their failures in the struggle for dominant influence in the countryside. One recently captured document contains the admissions that the Communists have lost control of one million people, and that they failed by 40 per cent to meet their 1966 goal of 300,000 guerrillas. These admissions are heartening evidence of an improving GVN pacification posture and provide tangible, if modest, grounds for optimism during 1967.

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Prospects

Despite all the problems involved, the prognosis for pacification is generally favorable. Given the improved pacification posture attained during 1966 and the modest goals set for 1967, we can expect further improvement. The new organizational setup on the American side emphasizes the relative importance attached to the program and should materially enhance the coordinated utilization of American resources. The current leadership on the Vietnamese side should also bring further improvements in the efficiency of the GVN's pacification operations. If General Thang is able to extend further his influence and authority over the military chain of command in the field, there is hope for increasingly effective integration of Vietnamese civil and military efforts.

With emphasis during 1967 on consolidation and on quality rather than quantity, the degree of GVN political influence and control in already pacified areas will be enhanced. Moreover, if this year's planning targets are met, some 500 additional hamlets and more than 1,000,000 additional people will be added to secure areas. A flexible approach to the utilization of resources will permit effective exploitation of favorable opportunities to add to these modest goals. As the new evaluation system shakes down, we should be able to improve our allocation of resources to shore up weak areas and thus enhance the consolidation process.

A crucial question is the effectiveness of the proposed reorientation of ARVN resources to direct support of pacification. If the units concerned are properly utilized in securing Revolutionary Development operations, the effectiveness of the civil cadre teams will be considerably enhanced and their political task made easier. Equally crucial is the extent to which allied military forces will be able to counter the anticipated intensification and reinforcement of Viet Cong guerrilla activity. If the Allied forces are successful, 1967 could prove to be a critical year, since the balance in the contest for influence over the peasantry would have shifted -- perhaps irrevocably -- to the GVN side.

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